

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### Listing of Claims:

- 1           1. (Currently amended) A method for facilitating the delegation of  
2       operations involved in providing digital signatures to a signature server, the  
3       method comprising:  
4           allowing a user to authenticate the signature server prior to sending a  
5       message to the signature server;  
6           receiving the message from the user at the signature server, the message  
7       including an item to be signed on behalf of the user by the signature server, a user  
8       identifier which identifies the user, and an application identifier which identifies  
9       the application being used;  
10          authenticating the user at the signature server;  
11          determining whether the user is authorized to sign the item by  
12       communicating with an authority server that is separate from the signature server;  
13          looking up a private key for the user at the signature server based on the  
14       user identifier and the application identifier; and  
15          signing the item with the private key for the ~~user;~~user.  
16          ~~wherein the signature server and the authority server are maintained within~~  
17       ~~an organization.~~

- 1           2-3 (Canceled).

1           4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein determining  
2 whether the user is authorized to sign the item involves looking up an  
3 authorization for the user based upon an identifier for the user as well as an  
4 identifier for an application to which the user will send the signed item.

1           5-6 (Canceled).

1           7. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising  
2 returning the signed item to the user so that the user can send the signed item to a  
3 recipient.

1           8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further  
2 comprises configuring the signature server to accommodate a new user by:  
3           receiving a request from an authorized entity to add the new user;  
4           generating a key pair for the new user, including a new user private key  
5 and a new user public key;  
6           communicating with a certification authority to obtain a certificate for the  
7 new user based on the key pair; and  
8           storing the certificate and the key pair for the new user in a location that is  
9 accessible by the signature server to enable the signature server to sign items on  
10 behalf of the new user.

1           9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further  
2 comprises configuring the signature server to delete an old user by:  
3           receiving a request from an authorized entity to delete the old user;  
4           notifying a certification authority to revoke a certificate for the old user;  
5 and

6 removing the private key for the old user from the signature server, so that  
7 the signature server can no longer sign items on behalf of the old user.

1 10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the method  
2 further comprises archiving the message and the signed item at the signature  
3 server.

1 11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further  
2 comprises forwarding the signed item to an archive server in order to be archived.

1 12. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing  
2 instructions that when executed by a computer cause the computer to perform a  
3 method for facilitating the delegation of operations involved in providing digital  
4 signatures to a signature server, the method comprising:  
5 allowing a user to authenticate the signature server prior to sending a  
6 message to the signature server;  
7 receiving the message from the user at the signature server, the message  
8 including an item to be signed on behalf of the user by the signature server, a user  
9 identifier which identifies the user, and an application identifier which identifies  
10 the application being used;  
11 authenticating the user at the signature server;  
12 determining whether the user is authorized to sign the item by  
13 communicating with an authority server that is separate from the signature server;  
14 looking up a private key for the user at the signature server based on the  
15 user identifier and the application identifier; and  
16 signing the item with the private key for the ~~user;~~user.  
17 ~~wherein the signature server and the authority server are maintained within~~  
18 ~~an organization.~~

1           13-14 (Canceled).

1           15. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of  
2 claim 12, wherein determining whether the user is authorized to sign the item  
3 involves looking up an authorization for the user based upon an identifier for the  
4 user as well as an identifier for an application to which the user will send the  
5 signed item.

1           16-17 (Canceled).

1           18. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of  
2 claim 12, wherein the method further comprises returning the signed item to the  
3 user so that the user can send the signed item to a recipient.

1           19. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12,  
2 wherein the method further comprises configuring the signature server to  
3 accommodate a new user by:  
4           receiving a request from an authorized entity to add the new user;  
5           generating a key pair for the new user, including a new user private key  
6 and a new user public key;  
7           communicating with a certification authority to obtain a certificate for the  
8 new user based on the key pair; and  
9           storing the certificate and the key pair for the new user in a location that is  
10 accessible by the signature server to enable the signature server to sign items on  
11 behalf of the new user.

1           20. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12,  
2 wherein the method further comprises configuring the signature server to delete an  
3 old user by:  
4           receiving a request from an authorized entity to delete the old user;  
5           notifying a certification authority to revoke a certificate for the old user;  
6 and  
7           removing the private key for the old user from the signature server, so that  
8 the signature server can no longer sign items on behalf of the old user.

1           21. (Previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of  
2 claim 12, wherein the method further comprises archiving the message and the  
3 signed item at the signature server.

1           22. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 12,  
2 wherein the method further comprises forwarding the signed item to an archive  
3 server in order to be archived.

1           23. (Currently amended) An apparatus that facilitates delegating  
2 operations involved in providing digital signatures, comprising:  
3           a signature server;  
4           an authentication mechanism that is configured to allow a user to  
5 authenticate the signature server prior to sending a message to the signature server  
6           a receiving mechanism within the signature server that is configured to  
7 receive the message from the user, the message including an item to be signed on  
8 behalf of the user by the signature server, a user identifier which identifies the  
9 user, and an application identifier which identifies the application being used;  
10           an authenticating mechanism configured to authenticate the user at the  
11 signature server;

12 a determining mechanism configured to determine whether the user is  
13 authorized to sign the item by communicating with an authority server that is  
14 separate from the signature server;  
15 a lookup mechanism within the signature server that is configured to look  
16 up a private key for the user based on the user identifier and the application  
17 identifier; and  
18 a signing mechanism within the signature server that is configured to sign  
19 the item with the private key for the ~~user~~; user.  
20 ~~wherein the signature server and the authority server are maintained within~~  
21 ~~an organization.~~

1 24-25 (Canceled).

1 26. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the  
2 authorization mechanism is configured to determine whether the user is  
3 authorized to sign the item by looking up an authorization for the user based upon  
4 an identifier for the user as well as an identifier for an application to which the  
5 user will send the signed item.

1 27-28 (Canceled).

1 29. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising a  
2 sending mechanism within the signature server that is configured to return the  
3 signed item to the user so that the user can send the signed item to a recipient.

1 30. (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising an  
2 initialization mechanism that is configured to:  
3 receive a request from an authorized entity to add a new user;

4           generate a key pair for the new user, including a new user private key and  
5 a new user public key;  
6           communicate with a certification authority to obtain a certificate for the  
7 new user based on the key pair; and to  
8           store the certificate and the key pair for the new user in a location that is  
9 accessible by the signature server to enable the signature server to sign items on  
10 behalf of the new user.

1           31. (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising a deletion  
2 mechanism that is configured to:  
3           receive a request from an authorized entity to delete an old user;  
4           notify a certification authority to revoke a certificate for the old user; and  
5 to  
6           remove the private key for the old user from the signature server, so that  
7 the signature server can no longer sign items on behalf of the old user.

1           32. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising  
2 an archiving mechanism that is configured to archive the message and the signed  
3 item at the signature server.

1           33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising an archiving  
2 mechanism that is configured to forward the signed item to an archive server in  
3 order to be archived.